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UNCLAS MUSCAT 000388

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/ARPI, AND NEA/PPD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAL SOCI OIIP KMDR KPAO IS MU

SUBJECT: JERICHO PRISON ATTACK DRAWSIRE AT U.S., UK

¶1. (U) The March 14 Israeli raid on Jericho Prison and seizure of Palestinian suspects drew strong condemnation in Omani newspaper editorials the following day. The independently owned Arabic daily "Al-Watan" placed its editorial on the front page, asserting that Israel's actions were clearly illegal and have only served to make a hero of Ahmed Saadat. Local media carried a statement by GCC Secretary General Attiyah also criticizing the Israeli

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action. Popular reactions in the local Internet message board "al-Sablah" overwhelmingly heaped blame upon the U.S. and UK governments for withdrawing their monitors from the prison prior to the Israeli attack, taken as proof of collusion in the operation. The volume of postings on the topic exceeded 47 pages by the morning of March 15.

¶2. (SBU) The Omani government has made no statement in reaction to the Israeli strike. In a March 15 discussion on other topics, Pol/Econ Chief explained to the MFA Undersecretary's main Embassy interlocutor the reasons for the USG decision to pull its monitors from the prison, denying there was active collusion with Israel on its subsequent operation. The MFA official took positive note.

BALTIMORE